2.2 Growth

Analysis of the potential growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project is based on demographic information from the 2010 United States Census data, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) 2012–2035 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)[1] growth forecasts for the Cities of San Juan Capistrano, Mission Viejo, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Laguna Hills, and Lake Forest, County of Orange, and the Orange County Treasurer Tax Collector. This analysis relies on the following conditions regarding growth:

- Orange County's population would continue to grow through 2050 due to its strategic location on the Pacific Coast and access to growing Asian economies.
- Orange County would attract growth because of its likeliness to have growing commercial and retail business opportunities through 2035.
- SCAG's growth estimates for the County indicate a potential population growth increase approaching 16 percent by 2035 for the Study Area.

Direct growth-inducing impacts are generally associated with the provision of urban services and the extension of infrastructure to an undeveloped area. The extension of services and facilities to an individual site can reduce development constraints for other nearby areas and can serve to induce further development in the vicinity. Indirect or secondary growth-inducing impacts consist of growth in the area by additional demand for housing, employment, and goods and services associated with population increases caused by, or attached to, new development.

2.2.1 Regulatory Setting

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, which established the steps necessary to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), require evaluation of the potential environmental consequences of all proposed federal activities and programs. This provision includes a requirement to examine indirect consequences, which may occur in areas beyond the immediate influence of a proposed action and at some time in the future. The CEQ regulations, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1508.8, refer to these consequences as

[1] http://rtpscs.scag.ca.gov/Documents/2012/final/SR/2012fRTP_GrowthForecast.pdf.

secondary impacts. Secondary impacts may include changes in land use, economic vitality, and population density, which are all elements of growth.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) also requires the analysis of a project's potential to induce growth. CEQA Guidelines, Section 15126.2(d), require that environmental documents "…discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment…"

2.2.2 Affected Environment

This section describes demographic characteristics of Orange County and the Cities of San Juan Capistrano, Mission Viejo, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Laguna Hills, and Lake Forest.

Orange County has been one of the fastest growing areas in the State over the past 40 years. The cities within the Study Area are built out, and most additional population and employment growth is expected to take place through the natural increase and redevelopment of existing land uses or infill development of vacant parcels. Land uses within the Study Area are already established, with limited opportunity for a new unplanned large-scale development.

As discussed in Section 2.1.1.2, Future Land Use, there are several approved developments included in the General Plans for the Study Area cities. These approved developments are consistent with SCAG projections and are therefore accounted for in local and regional growth.

The proposed project is premised on certain assumptions, as explained earlier, regarding growth in the Study Area. Orange County, as well as all of Southern California, has experienced dramatic growth for the last 30 years, and this trend is expected to continue. During the past several decades, the SCAG region, including Orange, Imperial, Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Ventura Counties, has been one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. Between 1950 and 1970, the population doubled in size, growing at a rate of five percent per year. Between 1980 and 1990, the region's population grew by over 25 percent, to 14.6 million. Between 1990 and 2000, the region's population grew by nearly 15 percent, to 16.5 million (SCAG 2001).

Table 2.2-1 shows the existing and forecast growth in Orange County, as a whole, and each of the cities within the Study Area. To extrapolate to a 2045 horizon, a growth factor was applied. As used in the *Traffic Report* (June 2012), the Orange County Projections 2010 (OCP-2010) demographic data in the general vicinity of the Study Area indicates approximately 25 percent growth over the next 25 years (i.e.,

Table 2.2-1 Population Growth Estimates

City or County	2008	2020	2035	2045	Percent Change 2008 to 2045
Orange County	2,989,000	3,266,000	3,421,000	3,506,600	17.3%
City of Lake Forest	77,200	88,100	87,400	89,600	16.1%
City of Laguna Woods	16,200	17,000	16,900	17,400	7.4%
City of Laguna Hills	30,300	32,100	32,000	32,800	8.3%
City of Laguna Niguel	62,700	65,700	65,200	66,900	6.6%
City of Mission Viejo	93,200	96,600	97,000	99,500	6.8%
City of San Juan Capistrano	34,400	38,100	37,800	38,800	12.8%

Source: SCAG adopted 2012 RTP Integrated Growth Forecast
SCAG = Southern California Association of Governments

one percent per year, on average), and the freeway traffic forecasts indicate 18 to 23 percent growth over that same time period (about 0.8 percent per year, on average). Since the 2035 projections include substantial future development in the south county area, which is largely built out by 2035, additional growth past 2035 is not anticipated to occur at the same rate as the anticipated growth over the next 25 years. For the purpose of this analysis, annual growth between 2035 and 2045 is assumed to occur at one-fourth of the average annual rate expected between 2010 and 2035. One-fourth of the one percent average annual growth equates to 0.25 percent average annual growth, or a total of 2.5 percent for ten years, which has been applied to the 2035 population forecasts to derive 2045 population forecasts.

According to these forecasts, the population in Orange County would increase by 17.3 percent by 2045. The City of Lake Forest is predicted to experience a similar level of increase (16.1 percent) to that of the County. The remaining cities are projected to increase their population by approximately six to eight percent, with the exception of San Juan Capistrano (12.8 percent). The projected growth shown in Table 2.1-1 includes future approved development, such as the Rancho Mission Viejo planned community and the Laguna Niguel Gateway Specific Plan. Due to the lack of

private vacant land in the Study Area, there are limited opportunities for large-scale new development to occur in the Study Area.

2.2.3 Environmental Consequences

The environmental consequences of the proposed project for potential direct and indirect impacts to growth are analyzed both for the Build Alternatives and for the No Build Alternative.

2.2.3.1 Temporary Impacts

No Build Alternative – Alternative 1

The No Build Alternative does not involve construction activities; therefore, there would be no temporary impacts on growth-inducing factors.

Build Alternatives – Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) and Alternative 3

Build Alternatives 2 and 3 would not have any temporary direct or indirect impacts on growth-inducing factors since temporary construction does not induce growth.

2.2.3.2 Permanent Impacts

No Build Alternative – Alternative 1

Under the No Build Alternative, no modifications to the existing freeway facility would occur. The existing Interstate 5 (I-5) improvements within the Study Area are not consistent with the regional mobility goals of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), or the affected cities, and would not provide the transportation infrastructure, or meet the goals and objectives, of OCTA's Long-Range Transportation Plan and the SCAG RTP. These regional planning documents anticipate the growth planned within the local jurisdictions within Orange County and specifically the Study Area and respond to this projected growth. The No Build Alternative would not influence the level of growth within the local cities in the Study Area since these jurisdictions are primarily built out, and there are limited areas available for development or redevelopment. Therefore, the No Build Alternative is not anticipated to influence the amount, location, and/or distribution of growth or housing and jobs in the local cities and unincorporated areas within the Study Area. Existing congestion would remain within the Study Area and would continue in the future under this alternative and could affect the desirability of these areas for economic development.

Build Alternatives – Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) and Alternative 3

The "first-cut screening" for the proposed project revealed that no further growth analysis was required. The elements evaluated during this screening are summarized below.

In terms of accessibility, the Build Alternatives do not change points of accessibility along I-5 or provide new access to the area. The Build Alternatives are intended to provide lane capacity enhancements through the corridor to reduce existing and future delay. It would not accommodate additional traffic beyond what is currently projected with or without the project; however, many access-related beneficial effects to system users would result due to travel time savings. Lane additions and ramp, interchange and other planned system improvements would enhance the efficiency of I-5 by maximizing its capacity, thereby reducing travel time delays. These system improvements are anticipated to result in local and regional benefits to users. Local benefits would include increased access to jobs, services, and community facilities. Regionally, a more efficient freeway system would reduce the number of delays to connecting freeways by better managing traffic flow.

In terms of accessibility, Alternative 2 would provide the greatest improvements related to decreased travel time and increased travel speed. Although Alternative 3 adds two general purpose lanes from Crown Valley Parkway to Alicia Parkway, it has slightly higher travel times and slightly lower travel speeds due to a bottleneck issue that is created at the northerly project limit. In the existing condition, north of El Toro Road, there are five general purpose lanes in each direction on I-5 (in addition to HOV lanes), and four general purpose lanes in each direction south of El Toro Road. Alternative 2 would match this cross section at the northerly project limit because it proposes five general purpose lanes in each direction. Alternative 3, however, would have a wider cross section (six general purpose lanes in each direction) that would need narrow to five lanes to match the existing section. This creates a bottleneck at the north end of the project that affects the systemwide accessibility.

In terms of influencing growth, the Build Alternatives would address existing operational and capacity deficiencies and would not foster growth in excess of what is projected due to the lack of vacant land in the Study Area. The Build Alternatives would not be expected to influence the amount, location, and/or distribution of growth in the cities within the Study Area nor the County since no new interchanges

are proposed and the Study Area is essentially built out. Due to the fact that very few open areas are available in the close vicinity of the Study Area, the Build Alternatives would not create new housing or opportunities for capital investment by the public or private sectors.

In terms of project-related growth, the proposed project is not growth inducing because it does not include land uses or activities that would encourage development or attract additional businesses or people. In addition, the location, timing, and level of future growth in the Study Area would also depend on the availability of certain types of infrastructure/services (e.g., water, sanitary sewers, and schools). Plans for critical future infrastructure are addressed by the individual jurisdictions and agencies providing these services to existing and future development, and their availability would affect the location, level, and timing of future development regardless of the proposed project. Because the proposed transportation improvements partially accommodate existing development, the proposed project would have no substantial potential for stimulating the location, rate, timing, or amount of growth locally or regionally. Moreover, the amount of vacant land or land ready for development within the Study Area is extremely limited.

The Build Alternatives do not remove an impediment to growth because the proposed project would not provide an entirely new public facility. Rather, the Build Alternatives include capacity enhancements along an existing freeway corridor that are intended to respond to expected demand and improve operations. The more effective use of freeway capacity is a response to congested conditions that have arisen from past development trends. Future growth, as approved in the context of adopted regional and local plans, requires such management approaches to attempt to maintain acceptable LOS on the transportation system.

In terms of foreseeable impacts to resources of concern, the Build Alternatives are not a precedent-setting action and would not affect resources of concern (e.g., utilities, population, and housing) because land use within the Study Area include plans for future growth. Service providers also regularly evaluate growth trends and provide required infrastructure upgrades, as needed. As noted above, the Build Alternatives would facilitate the improved mobility and capacity for future conditions and would not result in project-related growth or influence growth.

The “first cut screening” analysis above demonstrates that the Build Alternatives would not change access but would instead facilitate mobility to jobs, services, and

community facilities by improving commute times for users. The regional freeway network would also benefit from reduced delays. Resources of concern would not be affected because the Build Alternatives are not growth inducing and would not result in reasonably foreseeable growth. Based upon the analysis above, the Build Alternatives do not require further analysis of growth-related impacts.

2.2.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

It has been determined that the proposed project is not growth-inducing since the potential for unplanned development is limited, given the built-out nature of the Study Area and entitlement status of existing vacant land. Therefore, no avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are required.

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